

Lu Feiran

When white-collar worker Catherine Liang turned to an online lifestyle platform for tips on her planned trip to Yunnan Province for the National Day holiday last month, she found a long list of posts that began with “Listen to me!”

“Listen to me! Do not go to restaurants that are highly recommended on review apps because they’re bad.”

“Listen to me! The market food is much better than those in restaurants, but you have to go there before 9am.”

“Listen to me! Do not use mascara on the plateau as it might spurt out everywhere and don’t ask how I knew that.”

Liang was intrigued by what she read on the Xiaohongshu platform.

“The tips were quite interesting and different from usual travel tips that focus mainly on itineraries, scenic spots, hotels and traffic,” she said. “They pay attention more to details that may be overlooked but could indeed cause trouble.”

The “listen to me” travel trend among netizens involves two groups of people. One gives advice on traps and troubles that could beset travelers; the other solicits advice for trips to unfamiliar destinations.

According to a Xiaohongshu report on travel trends related to the National Day holiday, the “listen to me” and “I will listen” tips — or “mutual help” travel — were the most popular.

Xiaohongshu said that since September, more than 2,000 users have posted comments every day, with each attracting nearly 45 comments. The posts also offered topics such as “a day’s tour in my hometown” and recommendation from locals.

Zhao Siqi, a Shanghai-based part-time travel blogger, often shares with others her recommendations on visiting the city.

“Many tour guides online copy each other, so that when tourists come to Shanghai, apart from the very high-

Tips for trips: ‘Listen to me,’ but with a healthy dose of skepticism



找不着对象，大家觉得我问题出在哪

Left: The first photo Xiao'ai posted on Xiaohongshu. He asked netizens why he couldn't find a girlfriend.



Right: After following netizens' suggestions on physique, hairstyle and dressing, Xiao'ai looks like an entirely different man.

profile scenic spots, they are familiar with just Anfu and Wukang roads,” she said. “I want them to know that if they explore the city on foot, they will find quieter yet equally beautiful places.”

The “I will listen” part of the trend started in December 2021 with a man with the screen name Xiao'ai. He, then 25, wrote on Xiaohongshu: “I can't find a mate. Please tell me what the problem is,” and attached a picture of himself.

To begin with, most responses were pretty harsh. Netizens told him he was too fat, his hairstyle was ugly and his dressing was rustic. The man, however, wasn't offended. Instead, he took note of the comments and tried to address some of the criticism.

A month later, he posted an updated photo showing the results of his efforts and asked what more could be done. Netizens, surprised by his actions, toned down their criticism.

After a third picture was

posted, netizens finally realized that Xiao'ai was quite humble and keen to improve himself.

They began offering him kind suggestions on hairstyle, choice of glasses and dress style. One by one, he followed their advice.

Eventually, Xiao'ai posted photos showing a changed man and reported that he had found a girlfriend.

Two months ago, he said on Xiaohongshu that he had tied the knot.

But when it comes to tourism, it seems the “listen to me” tips are not all butterflies and rainbows.

As with most popular online trends, advertisers spotted opportunities. Soft sales promotions started to appear. On many “I will listen” posts, users warn that they will delete comments that are obviously ads.

Liu Deyan, associate professor with College of Tourism at Shanghai Normal University, said the “mutual help” travel

The “listen to me” posts offering travel tips have been popular among netizens on Xiaohongshu.

trend has emerged as people resume normal travel after the restrictive coronavirus era.

“At first, we saw young people were bent on visiting as many places as possible within a very short period of time. That was essentially a response to being locked down for three years and wanting to get out and about again,” she said.

“But now that things have returned to normal, people are paying more attention to the quality of travel and spending more time on trip preparation.”

Liu, however, added that some hidden risks might lurk behind “listen to me” tips. For one thing, it's difficult to discern if tips are posted by bona



fide tourists or by industry providers blowing their own trumpets and trying to disparage rivals.

“If the tips suggest cut-throat business competition, then they are not only valueless but may also be traps,” Liu said.

At the same time, tips given by other tourists may not be comprehensive because they reflect just one or maybe two visits. The information they proffer may not accurately reflect realities such as changes in seasons or local services.

“Therefore, we recommend tourists not blindly follow the tips but try to supplement them with information from multiple sources when preparing their trips,” Liu said.